

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MBABANE 3402

MASERU FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, SHUM, WZ
SUBJECT: CHARGE'S MEETING WITH SENIOR LIAISON OFFICER TO KING:
AMBASSADOR'S CREDENTIALS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. AT MY REQUEST I MET NOVEMBER 18 WITH M.M.P. MNISI, SWAZILAND GOVERNMENT'S SENIOR LIAISON OFFICER TO KING SOBHUZA. MARRIED TO ONE OF KING'S DAUGHTERS, MSISI IS ONE OF TWO MEN WHOM KING SEES MOST FREQUENTLY; OTHER IS KING'S PRIVATE SECRETARY M. MDINISO. AFTER PLEASANTRIES INCLUDING MY THANKING MNISI FOR ARRANGING FOR RECENT EMBASSY VISITORS TO VISIT A CHIEF'S KRAAL, I TOLD MNISI I WAS PERSONALLY CONCERNED ABOUT TWO MATTERS I WANTED TO BRING TO HIS ATTENTION IN SWAZI TRADITION OF FRANKNESS. I EMPHASIZED AT BEGINNING AND FREQUENTLY DURING CONVERSATION THAT I WAS NOT ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS. (FYI, AT INSISTENCE OF MODEST MNISI, MEETING WAS HELD AT EMBASSY.)

2. AMBASSADOR'S CREDENTIALS. I NOTED THAT, ACCORDING TO WORD FROM DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ALL OF 1977 WILL PASS WITHOUT AMBASSADOR NORLAND'S HAVING BEEN ABLE TO PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS TO KING. I SAID THIS COULD BE MININTERPRETED
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IN A FOREIGN CAPITAL SUCH AS WASHINGTON, WHICH MAINTAINS AN EMBASSY AND ACTIVE PROGRAM IN SWAZILAND. QUICKLY AND INSTINCTIVELY, MNISI BLAMED PROTOCOL CHIEF AND ASKED REASONS PROTOCOL CHIEF HAD GIVEN FOR DELAY. I RECITED A LIST OF EVENTS RELATED TO KING'S AVAILABILITY, INCLUDING: KING'S MID-YEAR MOVE TO SOUTH OF COUNTRY WHERE HE DOES NOT ACCEPT CREDENTIALS; KING'S MOURNING PERIOD ON DEATH OF SENIOR WIFE; AND MOST

RECENTLY KING'S FORMAL INITIATION OF YEAR-END RELIGIOUS PERIOD WHICH BEGINS WITH HIS DISPATCH NOVEMBER 19 OF SWAZIS WHO MUST FETCH INDIAN OCEAN WATER FOR INCWALA CEREMONY. SOMEWHAT SURPRISED HIMSELF BY THE TOTAL AMTUNT OF TIME THAT KING WAS UNAVAILABLE FOR THE SHORT BUT SYMBOLIC CREDENTIALS CEREMONY, MNISI SAID HE WOULD ASK KING WHETHER, IN EXCEPTIONAL DEPARTURE FROM TRADITION, CREDENTIALS COULD BE ACCEPTED DURING INCWALA PERIOD BEFORE 1977 ENDS. COMMENT: CHANCES ARE 90/10 THAT NOTHING WILL HAPPEN. HOWEVER, EVEN IF THIS TURNS OUT TO BE THE CASE, MY TALK WITH MNISI SHOULD SENSITIZE KING TO DESIRABILITY OF ARRANGING CREDENTIALS CEREMONY JUST AS SOON AS INCWALA PERIOD OVER IN LATE JANUARY OR EARLY FEBRUARY.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS. I SAID THAT, AS MNISI AWARE, AMERICAN AND WORLD INTEREST WAS FOCUSING ON UNDESIRABLE PRACTICES INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA, SUCH AS DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGES. IT WAS REASONABLE TO ASSUME, I SAID, THAT THIS KIND OF ATTENTION WOULD INEVITABLY SWING TO NEIGHBORING STATES, INCLUDING SWAZILAND. I ADDED THAT THERE WERE THOSE WHO MADE A CONNECTION BETWEEN STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON ONE HAND, AND EXTENT OF COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE USG SHOULD EXTEND ON OTHER HAND. MNISIS SAID THERE WAS NO PARALLEL BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND SWAZILAND IN THIS CASE BECAUSE "THE NUMBER OF DETAINEES IS SO MUCH SMALLER HERE." HE SAID HE COULD THINK OF ONLY ONE OR TWO; BEING REASONABLY SURE OF MORE DETAINEES THAN THAT, I HINTED THAT FIGURE COULD BE LARGER

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BUT THAT I AS OUTSIDER COULD NOT KNOW FOR SURE. INTERESTINGLY, MNISI OFFERED NO DEFENSE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF DETENTION. I DID NOT PRESS TH POINT EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THERE WAS VIRTURE IN CHARGING A PERSON AND LETTING JUSTICE TAKE ITS COURSE, WHETHER THAT MEANT A LONGER IMPRISONMENT OF DEFENDANT OR THE DEFENDANT'S ACQUITTAL AND DEFENSE. COMMENT: FROM NISI'S SUBDUED REACTION, I GATHER HE HAS NOT BEEN APPROACHED ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE. WHILE TOO MUCH TO HOPE THAT HE WILL CONVEY THIS HUMAN-RIGHTS MESSAGE TO KING (WHO HOLDS ULTIMATE POWER), MNISI NOW AT LEAST AWARE THAT SOME OUTSIDERS ARE INTERESTED IN SUBJECT. HE SHOULD THEREFORE BE IN BETTER POSITION THAN PREVIOUSLY TO COMMENT IN ROYAL CIRCLES IF QUESTION ARISES ABOUT LEVEL OF FOREIGN AWARENESS.

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